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ABSTRACT

This publication offers a conceptual model which evaluates the various components comprising a satisfactory field practicum experience. The model, entitled SET, provides an outline of an effective, proven method for providing counselor trainees with satisfactory field practicum experiences, taking into account the roles and responsibilities of the supervisor, educator, and trainee. A cooperative effort is urged with recommendations that counselor educators relinquish the role of supervisor in favor of coordinator and consultant once the trainee has been placed. The argument is made that the on-site supervisor be given the primary responsbility for helping to set goals, to provide supervision and feedback, and to assess the overall performance of the trainee. It is also recommended that the counselor educator provide as much information as possible to the trainee and supervisor so that meaningful behavioral objectives can be established. (Author/PFS)

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SET: A THREE-PART MODEL FOR INTEGRATING COUNSELOR EDUCATORS AND SUPERVISORS

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ABSTRACT

SET: A THREE-PART MODEL FOR
INTEGRATING COUNSELOR EDUCATORS
AND SUPERVISORS

The authors offer a conceptual model which evaluates the various components which comprise a satisfactory field practicum experience. The model, entitled SET, takes into account the roles and responsibilities played by the supervisor, educator, and trainee. A cooperative effort is urged with recommendations that counselor educators relinquish the role of supervisor in favor of coordinator and consultant once the trainee has been placed. The argument is made that the on-site supervisor be given the primary responsibility for helping to set goals, to provide supervision and feedback, and to assess the overall performance of the trainee. It was also recommended that the counselor educator provide as much information as possible to the trainee and supervisor so that meaningful behavioral objectives can be established.

The SET model provides an outline of an effective, proven method for providing counselor trainees with satisfactory field practicum experiences.

SET: A THREE-PART MODEL FOR INTEGRATING COUNSELOR EDUCATORS AND SUPERVISORS

The notion that a supervised field experience for counselor trainees is an essential aspect of graduate education is well-supported in the counseling profession (ACES, 1972; APGA, 1964; Dash, 1975). There is a clear assumption among counselor educators and supervisors that a primary function of the field practicum is to provide the counselor trainee with the opportunity to apply the skills learned in the classroom and laboratory practicum.

The degree to which the counselor is able to integrate the ideal of the counselor educator with the realities of the supervisor's field setting will be facilitated by several components: a) the trainee's level of interpersonal functioning - the responsibility of the counselor educator; and b) the on-site supervision which is available - the responsibility of the field supervisor. These components should not be considered as mutually exclusive or independent efforts by the educator and supervisor, but rather as a cojoint activity designed to enhance the quality of the field experience for the counselor trainee.

In the past, the supervisor's role has been defined primarily by the counselor eductaor (Arbuckle, 1958, 1963; Patterson, 1964; Segrist & Nelson, 1972). However, this approach has not always

proven to be the most effective for meaningful field practicum experiences. Often, counselor educators question the field supervisor's quality of supervision, while the supervisors question the relevance of the counselor educator's instruction, with the counselor trainee caught somewhere in between.

Integrating the Components

The SET (Supervisor-Educator-Trainee) Model for field supervision was developed by the writers in coordination with supervisors, counselor educators, and students who, by the way, can be remarkably accuarate at preceiving what is needed from a field counseling experience. Basically, the three elements of SET include: 1) the function of the on-site supervisor in the specific field setting; 2) the role and coodination efforts of the counselor educator; and 3) the readiness of the counselor trainee to function satisfactorily in the field setting. It should be recognized that the trainees themselves are the most crucial ingradient in this model. However, it must be kept in mind that hte supervisor plays the dominant role in the filed experience, a fact which must be recognized by any field supervi ion model. Without this understanding, the field experience could have potentially limiting results for the trainee, the students served, as well as for the professional relationship between the supervisor and the counselor educator.

The Counselor -Trainee

Obviously, the most important component in any model of supervision is the trainee. Prior to any field placement assignment, the trainee must have reached a point where an array of competent counseling techniques and strategies can be provided. Since not all trainees attain comparable levels of functioning in their classroom or laboratory counseling experiences, the developmental level of the trainee is the primary determination of the SET model. This level of trainee functioning can be determined in several ways depending on the preference and orientation of the counselor educator (e.g. instructor's ratings and observations, self-ratings and observations, client-ratings, and peer evaluations). The SET model emphasizes observational evaluations stated in behavioral terms since these have been shown to be most effective for bringing about trainee learning and skill development. The presence of counseling skills necessary for minimally facilitative conditions, such as the use of refelctions, attending behavior, open-ended questions, goal-setting and so on, can be determined and rated from one of three perspectives: 1) the skill is not part of the trainee's repertoire; 2) the skill is part of the trainee's repertoire but is not being used appropriately; or 3) the skill is part of the trainee's repertoire and is being used appropriatley.

While skills to be taught to trainees will vary from program to program, SET has a general list of skills required of beginning counselors that serve as basic criteria for evaluation. Items from that list include the following counseling skills: a statement clarifying expectations; exploration through facilitative questioning; mutual goal setting; clarification, reflection and summarization; role-rehearsal and practice; and evaluation of progress.

Effective counseling will typically follow the above pattern in sequence and that sequence may occur entirely within one counseling session or over the course of several sessions. Nevertheless, each of these areas should be part of the counselor's repertoire of techniques and strategies. It becomes incumbent upon the counselor educator to insure that these skills, and others deemed important by the individual, be mastered prior to placing a trainee in a field setting.

Observation and evaluation of the trainee's performance in the laboratory practicum will provide the counselor educator with the best indication of the student's ability to interact in a helping and therapeutic manner. The SET Model stresses the importance of complete evaluations conducted in a systematic manner and using the results as diagnostic input for continued development of the trainee in both the lab and field setting.

Obviously, students will vary in their ability to offer facilitative skills and it is this qualitative difference which the counselor educator must consider when making field assignments. Regardless of the specific manner by which the trainee's readiness is determined, the question of whether the person is prepared for a field placement must be answered. Hesitation by the counselor educator in making this decision may be an indication that the trainee is not ready for a field placement.

The Supervisor

The key feature of SET is that the supervisor defines his or her own role for the field experience as well as the role of the trainee. The supervisor is in the best position to know what is necessary for a realistic and successful training experience. It is the supervisor who sets the requirements and pre-requisite skills for trainee placement, and it is the counselor educator who, in effect, coordinates the actions to make the SET Model work. With this in mind, considerable coordination efforts between supervisor and counselor educator are necessary to achieve this end. Defining what is needed for supervision and how to achieve it best is the primary responsibility of the supervisor. A key consideration of SET is placing the responsibility for supervision with the supervisor - where it belongs. Here, the use of contracts which precisely stipulate the experiences,

duties and responsibilites of all parties is essential to the effective use of the SET model.

Continued feedback from the supervisor will help the trainee to grow professionally and to make a meaningful contribution to those being served. Perhaps a more important form of feedback is that which the supervisor conveys to the counselor educator in the form of an overall evaluation. Grades are usually based on the completion of stated behavioral objectives and satisfactory evaluation , but more importantly than grades is the information gained about one's first professional counseling experience in a real-life setting. In this role, the supervisor plays a crucial part in transforming the counselor-trainee into a professional counselor.

The Counselor Educator

A primary responsibility of the counselor educator, prior to making any filed placements, involves the determination of the developmental level of each trainee, and secring appropriate field settings. The counselor educator must then consider the factors which either limit or enhance the supervisory experience of each student. Once the developmental level of each trainee has been established, the counselor educator considers the field placements available for each student's interests. If the situation is such that there is more than one setting available, then a determination must be made as to which setting can provide the most meaningful

experience for the student. Factors to be considered may include reports of students previously assigned to that setting, the compatibility of the university's goals and philosophies with those of the supervisor, the amount of supervision to be provided at the placement site, the qualifications and competencies of the person doing the supervision, the amount of counseling expected on a given day as opposed to clerical/administrative duties, distance from the university to the site as it influences the frequency of visits by the counselor educator, and the overall facilities available to the trainee for personal and professional growth.

Some additional factors which may influence the counselor educator's decision include the number of students in field settings, time and money allocated for travel, and most importantly, the coordination of the supervision experience with the field supervisor.

A counselor trainee should never be placed in a field setting until the counselor educator determines that he or she is able to provide, at least, minimally facilitative skills. However, the field placement is a growth experience and therefore the counselor educator has an obligation to both the student and the supervisor to indicate areas to work on. This will require informing both parties of areas of strength and weakness. This information then can be used

for setting behavioral objectives and goals towards which to work.

By the time the trainee is ready for a field placement, the counselor educator's job as educator changes to one of coordinator and consultant. Those counselor educators who are not willing to assume this new role and allow the responsibility to shift to the supervisor will be doing a mis-service to all those involved. The counselor educator's greatest contribution to a satisfactory field practicum will be one of preparation, placement, coordination, and consultation.

Evaluating SET

The SET Model for supervising field experiences has been used for several semesters with field placements in schools, community colleges, universities, and various human service agencies. Receiving considerable input from students and on-site supervisors, it has developed into an effective model for field practicum supervision.

Trainees have found the effective coordination and liaison between the counselor educator and on-site supervisor critical to a profitable practicum experience. The SET Model has received favorable evaluations from both supervisors and trainees who have experienced this integrated approach to field practicum. It would appear that the integration of the efforts of the counselor educator and supervisor to achieve effective and meaningful practice is an essential

goal for counselor education. The writers believe this goal has been achieved primarily because SET conceptualizes the supervision process as a cojoint effort with the primary responsibility of supervision resting with the supervisor and the primary responsibility for training resting with the counselor educator. Each member plays a vital role in the overall training program of counselors, and both are important for their unique contribution. The SET Model advocates a division of labor for the effective and efficient training and supervision of counselor-trainees.

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